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ABSTRACT

One of 52 theoretical papers on school crime and its relation to poverty, this chapter, by exploring the relationships among poverty, the ways schools are organized, and student disruption, generates notions that will help in developing a theoretical perspective on school disruption in terms of the various control patterns of school organization. This analysis suggests that school organizations emphasizing rule-oriented patterns of control experience more disruption than do schools that stress development of student commitment by way of normative controls. The paper begins by examining several research traditions regarding school disruption and reviewing categories of explanations. After discussing the presumed relationship of poverty and school disruption, a theoretical framework based on an organizational analysis of school control is suggested. Finally, solutions to school disruption are discussed in terms of the extent to which they stress either rule-oriented or norm-oriented patterns of control. (Author/MLF)

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POVERTY, SCHOOL CONTROL PATTERNS, AND STUDENT DISRUPTION

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ABSTRACT

A common thread in much of the discussion about school disruption is the presumed lack of discipline in today's public schools: they would be, so the argument goes, safer and more effective places for learning if only more rules were instituted and more efficient means of enforcing those rules were developed. This argument is commonly advanced during discussions of so-called high-crime schools in inner cities.

There are, however, theoretical and empirical grounds for believing that the effects of "get tough" policies are problematic regarding decreases in school disruption. This paper, by exploring the relationships among poverty, the ways schools are organized, and student disruption, will generate notions which will help in developing a theoretical perspective on school disruption in terms of the various control patterns of school organization. This analysis will suggest that school organizations emphasizing rule-oriented patterns of control experience more disruption than do schools which stress development of student commitment by way of normative controls.

The paper begins by examining several research traditions regarding school disruption and reviewing categories of explanations. After discussing the presumed relationship of poverty and school disruption, a theoretical framework based on an organizational analysis of school control will be suggested. Finally, solutions to school disruption will be discussed in terms of the extent to which they stress either rule-oriented or norm-oriented patterns of control.

Introduction

The 1970s have been marked by an increasing awareness on the part of both the public and the educational community of the problems of disruption in public schools. A common thread in much of this discussion is the presumed lack of discipline in today's schools: they would be, so the argument goes, safer and more effective places for learning if only more rules were instituted and more efficient means of enforcing those rules were developed. This type of thinking is commonly advanced during discussions of so-called high-crime schools in inner cities.

There are, however, theoretical and empirical grounds for believing that the effects of "get tough" policies are problematic regarding decreases in school disruption. By exploring the relationships among poverty, the ways schools are organized to control students, and student disruption, this paper is intended to generate notions which will help in developing a theoretical perspective on school disruption in terms of the control patterns of schools. In addition, this analysis should point toward areas for empirical research and educational policy. This analysis will suggest that

school organizations emphasizing rule-oriented patterns of control experience more disruption than do schools stressing development of student commitment by way of normative controls.

Disruption in American Public Schools

While American schools have long been characterized by instances of fighting and vandalism, the contemporary situation has aroused great public concern. A recent Gallup Poll (Gallup, 1976) lists "lack of discipline" as the respondents' prime complaint about public schools. About 50 percent of the respondents named "enforce stricter discipline" as the activity which would most improve the quality of American public education.

The extent of disruption in schools and the concomitant costs are becoming increasingly well known. The increase in reported acts of violence in schools has been well publicized as a result of Senator Birch Bayh's Subcommittee on Juvenile Delinquency's investigations (Our Nation's Schools, 1975), as have the enormous dollar expenditures related to school disruption, ranging up to 590 billion dollars a year ("Support for Juvenile," 1975). Moreover, the loss of learning and other ill effects on students and faculty brought on by a climate of fear has been

discussed (Lucas, 1977).

It is, nonetheless, possible to argue that the increase in school disruption is more apparent than real. For example, Young and Soldatis (1970) claim that the amount of breakage of school windows has decreased -- only the cost of windows has increased, thus offsetting the decreases. Another argument is that along with current interest in school crimes has gone increased reporting of incidents -- hence, the actual number of incidents has not increased; only the reporting of them has increased.[1] Another position would be that it is difficult to make any comparison between the extent of crime in school relative to crime in society, due to the many well-known weaknesses of our crime statistics, such as the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Reports (Criminal Statistics, 1972).[2]

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[1] This position needs to be contrasted to the position that actual offenses may be two to three times more common than official statistics report (Criminal Victimization in, 1967); that is to say, students' and faculty's reports of disruptive incidents might represent a mere tip of the iceberg, due to fear or to desire to settle their own accounts without official intervention.

[2] The National Institute of Education and the National Center for Educational Statistics are currently collecting and anlayzing data in an attempt to ascertain the extent to which school disruption exists.

Regardless of the extent to which school disruption is an artifact of reporting, the phenomonon itself is authentic: students and faculty are assaulted, and property is vandalized and stolen. It is difficult, however, to find agreement among school policy makers or scholars regarding just what school disruption is -- or isn't. The study of deviance and criminology has historically debated the issue of what defines a deviant act. I will return to this issue in the section relating poverty to school disruption, but some of the confusion inherent in any discussion of school disruption (or school crime, or school violence) arises from competing definitions. The Coleman report (Coleman et al., 1966) looked at "problems of discipline," such as tension between racial or ethnic groups, destruction of school property, stealing of a serious nature, physical violence against teachers, and using narcotics or stimulants. Bailey's (1970) survey of urban school districts discussed teacher and student boycotts, arson, property damage, rioting, and student-teacher physical confrontations, among other acts. In a study of group disorders in public high schools, Ritterbrand and Silberstein (1973) examined political disorders (mass picketing, circulation of petitions,

presentation of lists of demands) and nonpolitical disorders (free-for-alls and gang fights).

Disruption may be defined in either a more or less inclusive manner. A broad definition would include any and all acts which might appear to any actor in the setting as being undesirable. A narrow definition, on the other hand, might include only those offenses (homocide, rape, robbery, assault, burglary, drug/alcohol offenses) which comprise the FBI index of serious crimes, consequently excluding infractions of school rules such as skipping class, chewing gum, showing disrespect for teachers, harrassing students, and vandalizing school property. For the purposes of this paper, school disruption will be considered to be student violations of either school regulations or civil laws, in school or going to and from school, which interfere with the attainment of the school's formal goals.

Research on School Disruption

Curiously, there has been relatively little scholarship which examines the nature of school disruption from any theoretical perspective. While administrators have long been concerned with this issue, there was little extensive investigation until the late 1950s (Martin,

1961).

There has been a long tradition among psychologists of education of examining classroom discipline and management (Davidson & Seidman, 1974; Kounin, 1970; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Sears, 1918). Most of this work does not distinguish between serious and trivial misbehavior; thus, issues relating to murder and rape are seldom raised. In addition, the typical unit of analysis is the classroom; however, much disruptive behavior occurs in common areas (hallways and cafeterias) which are not the domains of any individual teacher.

Another rich tradition is that of juvenile delinquency research, primarily an interest of sociologists (Cloward & Ohlin, 1961; Cohen, 1955; Gold, 1963; Hirschi, 1969; Jensen, 1969; Miller, 1958; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Thrasher, 1963). While these studies have much to tell us about adolescent deviance (and I will return to them later), they typically treat the school as a setting which either generates delinquency or prevents it; seldom is the actual delinquency within schools examined. While there are careful and provocative studies of school disruption, given the extent of research in general on schools, there have been relatively few.

Most writing on school disruption has been by and

for those who have direct experience with it -- school practitioners. Articles in professional journals for teachers and administrators tend toward discussions of problems and proposed solutions for day-by-day practice ("How to Just," 1972; "Housing: Facing Up," 1974; Nielsen, 1971; Powell, 1972; Wells, 1971).

These articles frequently lack systematic evidence to support claims of success. For example, it is difficult to judge the effects of the described programs because other factors have usually not been controlled for. Most reports do not follow a program longitudinally: perhaps effects diminish over time. In a review of 137 school programs designed to deal with school disruption, Marvin, McCann, Connolly, Temkin, & Henning (1976) conclude that, while many school officials believed their programs to be successful in coping with disruptive behavior, very few had gathered adequate evaluation data to support their beliefs. My own review of almost 40 published reports of methods of dealing with school disruption discovered almost no instances of systematic evaluation (such as use of control or comparison groups).

A more serious shortcoming of much of the writing on school disruption is its lack of explanatory power.

When offered, explanations tend towards glib pronouncements of conventional wisdom ("kids have no respect for authority anymore"); seldom is an explanation informed by a theoretical perspective which would generate testable propositions.

Not only is it difficult to account for apparent successes of a given program, but it is difficult to ascertain whether the various aspects of a program are setting-specific or generalizable to other settings. A rigorous theoretical perspective might help with this. In the following sections, after discussing the research literature linking poverty to school disruption, I will suggest a theoretical position which accounts for disruption in American public schools.

Explanations For School Disruption

For a social phenomonon as complex as school disruption (or perhaps it is a cluster of phenomona), a variety of explanations might be suggested. Possible explanations have been offered from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, and this section is an attempt to order some of these explanations.

Characteristics of Society

In this category go explanations which seek to locate causes of school disruption in arenas broader than the school, as the school is considered to be merely one institution embedded in a larger society. Violence as a tradition in American culture (Rossi, 1968), violence learned at home (McGovern & Piers, 1972), violence learned from television (Somers, 1976), and violence learned in the neighborhood (Bailey, 1970) have been suggested as root causes. So have such societal policies and trends as retaining students in school beyond age 14 (Gallup, 1976), increases in ethnic pride (Bailey, 1970), increases in adolescent gang activity (Our Nation's Schools, 1975), and increased politicization of the schools (Ritterbrand & Silberstein, 1973).

Many, if not most, of these approaches share the implicit notion developed by Dreeben (1968) that schools socialize students into the ongoing society and that changes in schools will have to follow changes in that larger society (Jencks et al., 1972). Moreover, assuming that one of the above explanations were a potent one, it would yield few implications for school policy. For example, if we accept that a tendency to be disruptive is learned at home, there is very little that school policy makers can do to alter family patterns. Of course,

if home environment is an influence on school disruption, it does not follow that social researchers and social policy makers should ignore that fact. But this paper will suggest that there are influences on school disruption which are accessible to school policy makers (unlike home influences) and that many explanations seeking causes for school disruption beyond the school tell us little about how schools can cope with disruption, and less about why rates of disruption vary across students, classrooms, and schools. (I will return to this last point again.)

Characteristics of Students

This category is perhaps the most commonly encountered, as school professionals typically refer "problem students" to guidance counselors, school psychologists, psychiatric social workers, and psychiatrists. Given the general orientation of these professionals towards psychological theories, as well as their characteristic experience of working with individual students, it is hardly suprising that often (though not always) many explanations for disruptive behavior are rooted in characteristics of the individual student, with disruptive behavior being viewed as dysfunctional and pathological.

Numerous explanations have been advanced: physiological and/or genetic causes of personality disorders (Silberberg & Silberberg, 1971), low levels of ego development (Haan, 1973), aggressive personalities (Shane, 1974), frustration due to underachievement (Cardinell, 1974), paranoid personalities (Rader, 1975), ethnic background (Worcester & Ashbaugh, 1972), cultural deprivation (Rossi, 1968), restricted linguistic codes (Bernstein, 1961), and values inconsistent with those of middle-class school staff (Miller, 1958).

These explanations, like the characteristics-of-society ones, tend to shift the locus of explanation from the school. In this case, blame is frequently placed on the clients of the schools, as opposed to the schools themselves. Seldom is more than lip service paid to possible dysfunctions in the nature of the student's school experience which might be the result of inadequate school policy, and seldom are schools advised to set their own houses in order; on the contrary, students who do not conform are typically seen as being in need of change. I will return to this topic below, but for the present it is interesting to note that even violent students are not violent all the time, nor are they violent in every classroom. It is likely that there is some interaction

between characteristics which students bring to schools and characteristics of the schools themselves.

Characteristics of Schools

This category consists of approaches which look critically at schools and find them wanting. Physical aspects have been noted: appropriateness of location in terms of landscaping, lighting, access, etc. (Pablant & Baxter, 1975); the extent to which architecture encourages or discourages vandalism (Mallowe, 1976); age of the school plant, with new schools (Wells, 1971) and old schools (Greenberg, 1969) seen as encouraging vandals; school size, with large size seen as contributing to disruption (Berger, 1974).

Another group of explanations puts the blame on school curricula which are, alternately, boring (Linton, 1974), overly grade-oriented (McPartland & McDill, 1977), confining (Polk & Schafer, 1972), irrelevant to life plans (Stinchcombe, 1964), modularly scheduled (DeCecco & Richards, 1975), or rigid (Baily, 1970).

Similarly, teachers and administrators have been seen as setting inept policies (Safe Schools Act, 1973), avoiding problems (DeCecco & Richards, 1975), being out of touch with students (Bowman, 1972), being insensitive to students

(Redl, 1975), making unrealistic demands for discipline (Werthman, 1971), and maintaining poor classroom process (Leacock, 1969).

School organization has also been suggested as a contributing factor in disruption. School districts with large enrollments have been shown to have high levels of violence (Our Nation's Schools, 1975). Lack of student input to school decisions has been suggested as a contributor to school disruption (McPartland & McDill, 1977; McPartland, McDill, Lacey, Harris, & Novey, 1971). The authority structure of the school (Spady, 1973), tracking of students (Kelly, 1976), and the limited reward structure of schools (McPartland & McDill, 1977; Bryan & Horton, 1976) have all been offered as explanations.

This category (characteristics of schools) offers a variety of explanations which seek causes at the actual setting of school disruption -- the school itself. Moreover, school characteristic variables identify domains over which school policy makers can exercise control: while school district size is a difficult variable to manipulate, it is more amenable to change than parental income.

Organizational factors (a subcategory) are especially attractive because they deal with the actual actors in

the school setting; as schooling is essentially a social phenomonon, organizational variables take into account the setting in which the students act, rather than merely taking into account characteristics of the students. An organizational analysis will, therefore, form the basis of the theoretical perspective of this paper.

Poverty and School Disruption

There is a long tradition in social research of linking deviance to socioeconomic status (SES). Briefly, the argument might be characterized as proposing that persons of limited economic means (and/or the various attitudes, values, norms, or general social perspective which is presumed to accompany poverty) tend to be overrepresented in the ranks of deviants. This approach is particularly common in the juvenile delinquency literature (Chwast & Seller, 1968; Cloward & Ohlin, 1961; Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Shaw & McKay, 1942; Thrasher, 1963) and has been utilized to explain school disruption (usually in terms of the characteristics of low-SES students, such as their attitudes and values). Stinchcombe (1964) suggests that low-SES students become rebellious because they perceive that the school

curriculum is irrelevant to their life plans. Cohen (1955) and Miller (1958) argue that the values of the low-SES students differ from those of the school staff, while Cloward & Ohlin (1960) suggest that delinquents do not have as much access to school facilities as nondelinquents do. Schafer, Olexa, and Polk (1975) show that low-SES students tend to be put into the lower tracks in schools, and Kelly (1976) has reported that low-track students tend to be more disruptive than high-track ones. Correlational approaches such as these, however, do not establish the direction of causality.

While there is much disruptive behavior by students of low SES, delinquency is not necessarily a low-SES trait. There is, of course, a great majority of low-SES students who are not disruptive and there are many middle-class delinquents (Karacki & Toby, 1962; Nye, Short, & Olson, 1958). Moreover, student unrest is sometimes more prevalent in middle-class schools than in lower-class schools (Worcester & Ashbaugh, 1972).

The relationship between poverty and deviance has been attacked by revisionist theorists in criminology, who assert that many official definitions of crime reflect a class bias hostile to the poor (Taylor, Walton, & Young, 1973) as well as unacknowledged value-orientations

(Biderman, 1966). For example, Piliavin and Briar (1964) stress the discretion which police may exercise in deciding whether or not to arrest a suspect and how this discretion is frequently used to detain juveniles from poor or minority backgrounds. In a series of vivid anecdotes, Hollingshead (1949) relates how discipline was differentially enforced in Elmtown's high school, with rich students being mildly reprimanded (if at all), and the poor students being harshly punished and often excluded from the school. Thus we see statements such as Cohen's (1955) "Unquestionably, most delinquents are from the more 'needy' and 'underprivileged' classes ..." and Berg's (1967) observation that the "types of crime that preoccupy us as a society are concentrated among males in the lower income groups living in urban centers." However, different groups are preoccupied with different notions of crime: our society's gentle treatment of white-collar offenders is well known. Regarding schools, a student might well be expelled from one school for behavior which is tolerated at another (such as fighting).

While teachers and administrators see acts of disruption as being irrational and senseless, and thus needing to be eradicated, Becker (1963) argues that such a stance (with the concomitant labeling of deviants)

increases deviant behavior. I will return to this point, but the argument is that students sometimes perceive discrimination on the part of school staff, and react disruptively.

The relationship between poverty and deviance in schools becomes more problematic when the possibility of variance among rates of student disruption (while holding SES constant) arises. Power, Benn, and Morris (1972) found that in Tower Hamlet, a working-class area in London, different rates of juvenile delinquency were detected in the various secondary schools serving the area. They argue that since the students were of similar SES, the variance must be accounted for by differences between the schools, rather than by social class. In addition, Werthman (1971) observes that disruptive adolescent gang members are not disruptive all day in school and are not disruptive in certain classes; he suggests that there are specific effects attributable to individual teachers which interact with the students' characteristics.

A firm relationship between low SES and school disruption, then, appears difficult to establish. It is likely that SES is one of a variety of student

characteristics which interact with characteristics of society and characteristics of schools to produce disruption. Thus, information on SES alone is of limited value to school policy makers who are attempting to understand and respond to student disruption.

An Organizational Analysis of School Disruption

This analytical framework for understanding school disruption is based on the ways in which schools are organized to control students. Etzioni (1964, 1975) stresses the importance of the means by which a member is recruited into an organization in terms of accounting for that member's relationship to that organization. As most public school students are involuntarily recruited, a dynamic of tension - if not hostility - is created, tension which could lead to disruption.

As Carlson (1964) points out, public schools are institutions suffering from a twofold problem. First, they have minimal control over accepting/rejecting clients (with a few exceptions, such as students with certain handicaps, most schools are legally compelled to accept children of certain ages). Second, many of those students do not wish to be clients of that organization, and are there as the result of coercion by

either parents or the state.

Spady (1973) argues that a major function of schools is that of custody and control and that (echoing Waller, 1967) the potentially volatile situation created by involuntary recruitment of students is a major concern to many teachers and administrators. The importance of controlling students is a recurring theme in the educational literature (Gordon, 1957; Hargreaves, 1967; Henry, 1963, 1972; Waller, 1967; Willower, 1965, 1975), and educators have had reason to be concerned with unwilling students. For example, Nault (1974) found that students who have had little choice in determining their school were less likely to comply with the school's disciplinary expectations than were students who were voluntarily affiliated with the school.

Schools are confronted, then, with the task of controlling students who are forced to attend. Spady (1973) discusses two models of social control (the act of gaining compliance): (1) involuntary control through the application of power and (2) voluntary control, through either persuasion or authority. Power (Weber, 1958) and coercion (Etzioni, 1964) are similar terms: both convey a notion of the manipulation of resources (such as time and prestige and privileges, as

well as material objects such as money), either potentially (as in a threat) or actively (by using force) to secure compliance against another's will. Spady suggests that this is an expensive posture for an organization to assume, as for either threats or force to be credible, there must be sufficient organizational commitment to back them up.

An alternative posture for an organization to assume would be that of persuasion, essentially a policy-by-policy negotiating on the part of leaders and clients. This posture has strong democratic tendencies, and is favored by many, including some antiauthoritarian critics of American public schooling. The difficulties of institutionalizing persuasion are often insurmountable, as the experience of many alternative schools has shown (Firestone, 1977), and for the massive, heavily bureaucratized school systems currently in existence, this is hardly a realistic alternative.

The last posture Spady discusses (1973) is that of authority, the voluntary granting of legitimacy to leaders by clients of an organization. This occurs when clients are willing to suspend their judgment and comply with a demand by a leader because they have previously accepted

that leader's right to lead, and have granted authority to the leader. Authority cannot be forced from the clients: they must grant it voluntarily. Spady argues that as power and persuasion are expensive and not always effective, a posture based on gaining legitimacy in the eyes of students will be more effective in terms of controlling those students.

In a similar vein, Henry (1973) distinguishes between discipline and order. Discipline, according to Henry, is forced on the individual by external forces, and the individual has no stake in obedience beyond an avoidance of unpleasant consequences. Order, on the other hand, is internally imposed by the individual who takes the goals of the organization as his own, and complies voluntarily. Thus, order is internal, or normative, in that control is exercised by members having internalized perscriptions for "right" behavior. Discipline on the other hand, is external, or rule-oriented, in that control is exercised involuntarily, through either threats or the use of sanctions imposed for failure to comply with either written or unwritten rules.

Willower (1965, 1975) and Willower, Eidell, and Hoy (1973), point out that external-control organizations

tend to be custodial and coercive.[3] External-control schools frequently exact student compliance through the exercise of power, typically utilizing such mechanisms as grades, poor recommendations, withdrawal of privileges, and practices of exclusion (suspension and expulsion). On the other hand an organization in which order exists -- one stressing internal controls -- relies on its members' internalized norms and commitment.

While rules and norms coexist in organizations (and Durkheim pointed out that most rules function due to the existence of norms), an organization may be broadly classified as one which stresses internal controls or one which stresses external controls.[4] A reform school or

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[3] It is important to note that coercion does not necessarily imply repression (Michalowski & Bohlander, 1976). While the two are often difficult to separate, it should be noted that schools characterized by external controls are not necessarily inhumane or cruel. It is not particularly useful to question whether organizations should control their members. They in fact do, and my position is that schools must and should come to grips with this basic organizational fact of life. The more useful tack is to inquire into the nature of these controls (e.g., the extent to which they are coercive); but coercion is not to be considered bad per se.

[4] There are, of course, certain problems inherent in attempts to reduce any complex social relationship to a polarity. Anderson (1959) and McKeachie (1954) discuss many of these objections.

prison typically stresses external controls (strict rules and sanctions) because most clients have little commitment to the organization's goals. A monastery, however, might be characterized as an internal organization, for, despite numerous and strict rules, the members follow them voluntarily: they need not be coerced because they share a commitment to the organization.

The Deterrence Approach

The current increases in school disruption have been accompanied by increasing demands for more discipline in schools. And the traditional response of schools has been to increase rules and the strictness of their enforcement -- in other words, to make their control orientations more external.

As the utilitarian philosophers pointed out, the notion of deterrence involves the assumption that a punishment outweighing the profit of an offense will dissuade potential rule violators — or, as Homans (1974) put it, people will cease a behavior when they believe it to be costing them too much. This assumes that people are rational, profit-maximizing beings.

There is some evidence suggesting that deterrent

effects sometimes exist. Jensen (1969) found a negative correlation between deviant behavior and belief in getting caught among adolescent boys.[5] However, there is a considerable body of research indicating that official sanctions do not significantly deter criminal violations. In a review of the literature of the effects of official sanctions (arrests, fines, imprisonments, etc.), Tittle and Logan (1973) question the ability of sanctions significantly to deter violators. Chiricos and Waldo (1970) state that the presence of laws, combined with a certainty of being punished, is still not enough to deter violators. While there are different types of people committing different types of violations, Andenaes (1966) concludes from a review of the social science and jurisprudential literature that there is little compelling evidence to support policies based on deterrence.

In addition, the argument has been advanced that the very rules designed to limit deviance might well be increasing it. Becker (1963) claims that much deviant behavior is a response to being labeled deviant.

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[5] Jensen's results are ambiguous: the correlations differed according to age.

For example, as Farrell and Nelson (1976) put it, a person labeled and treated as a homosexual will begin to act like a homosexual. In a study of the North Carolina penal system, Ellis, Grasmick, and Gilman (1974) found that prisoners believe that violence in prison frequently comes about as a result of guards enforcing rules and punishing violators. Werthman (1971) found that adolescent gang members in high school act disruptively in response to teachers' enforcing of school rules.

Part of the difficulty in understanding and responding to disruption arises from difficulties of definition. Definitions of disruption tend to be created by officials (usually legal authorities, or, in the case of schools, administrators and teachers). As these classes of people tend to be committed to the goals of the organization, they typically view disruption as irrational, and treat it as such. I want to suggest that this approach is of limited value in understanding and responding to student disruption.

At least two explanations might be considered. First, it might be argued that much disruptive behavior is quite rational (in the economic sense) in that students acquire resources by disruption and/or crime. These resources could be material or nonmaterial. Stolen school equipment

can be fenced for a profit, and lunch money shaken down from other students is attractive. Political power and prestige are important to students, and students are often less rewarded by the formal school structure's rewards (grades, teacher approval) than they are by the informal approval of their peers (Coleman, 1961; Cusick, 1973).

A second type of disruption is also likely. Much disruption does not appear to be for gain (vandals frequently do not steal), and Cohen (1968) and Wells (1971) have suggested that this type of disruption occurs when students sense that they have no other alternatives. Herndon (1971) vividly captures the feelings of students who believe themselves to be in a repressive environment which is systematically unresponsive to their needs and interests -- and believe that they can only respond with violence. This would be consistent with Merton's (1957) analysis of alternative reactions to an alienating situation in which rebellion is perceived as the sole action available.

An Alternative Approach

The alternative to external control -- rules and coercion -- is the internal-control model described earlier.

Emphasizing conformity to shared, internalized norms, an internal-control organizational structure does not need to rely on the questionable effects of deterrence. Furthermore, the absence of the internal-control pattern has been linked to juvenile delinquency -- many investigators (Gold, 1963; Hirschi, 1969; Matza, 1964) have reported that delinquents feel little attraction to the values of contemporary society and are either not committed to them or manage to neutralize them.

In an experimental setting, Schwartz and Orleans (1966-1967) found that appeals to "right" behavior were more effective than threats of sanctions in limiting deviant behavior. Similarly, Salem and Bowers (1970) concluded that normative approaches were more effective than formal sanctions in dealing with college infractions, while Bowers (1968) and Kraut (1976) found negative correlations between rates of deviance (such as shop-lifting) and peer disapproval among college students.

While deterrence via official sanctions is less potent than is commonly thought, it can limit deviance. Using the concepts developed by Willower (1965, 1975), Duggal (1969) found that schools characterized by external controls had higher rates of unrest than did schools with internal patterns of control.

Poverty and School Control Patterns

Low SES does not directly cause school disruption: rates of deviance vary across both individuals and schools when social class is held constant. However, there appears to be a relationship between control orientation of schools and disruption and there is a relationship between social class and control orientation of schools, with lower-SES schools tending to be more custodial and coercive than middle-class schools (Willower, Eidell, & Hoy, 1973). Thus, our discussion of poverty will be focused, not on family income or occupation, but on the intervening variable, the experience of low-SES children in schools and how those schools are organized.

Bernstein (1961) claims that the restricted linquistic codes of working-class children compel schools to rely on threats, corporal punishment, and the immediate consequences of having violated a rule, while middle-class children's more abstract codes allow schools to emphasize other forms of control, such as "a talking through of the misdemeanor." While middle-class parents encourage such traits as initiative and independence in their children (Heilbroner, 1976), students exhibiting these traits are considered disruptive in lower-class schools because

parents and teachers in those schools encourage such traits as promptness, neatness, and obedience (Bowles & Gintis, 1976). Kozol (1967) has described how school personnel tend to respond to lower-class children with strict enforcement of rules (cf. Hollingshead, 1949).

To sum up, many low-SES children are in schools characterized by rule-oriented control patterns, patterns which seem to be associated with school disruption. What implications does this have for educational policy? The relation of disruption to school control patterns will help to identify variables which, unlike SES, school policy makers can manipulate. Schools might alter their organizational patterns in ways which would make control more internal and less custodial and involuntary.

Solutions to School Disruption

This section reviews solutions to school disruption in terms of the extent to which they deal with the control patterns of the school. I have selected programs which might be implemented by schools (as opposed to those which necessitate intervention by some other agency; for example, the Federal Communications Commission might be called

on to limit violent television programming). The categories were developed by Marvin et al. (1976) in a review of programs contracted by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

Security Systems

This is the solution most frequently suggested in the literature, reflecting a faith in technological solutions to social problems. Use, or improvement, of a security system is based on a deterrence model -- school sites are "hardened" to make vandalism and disruption difficult, and to make it more certain that violators will be apprehended. Specific suggestions have included unbreakable window material, such as Lexan, and easy-to-clean paint (Nielsen, 1971); police dogs (Wells, 1971); guards (L'Hote, 1970; Powell, 1972); electronic sensors in libraries to detect unchecked-out books (Hicks, 1972); noise, motion, light, and pressure detectors, automatic telephone signalers, special lights, and identification cards (Agrella, 1975; "How to Just," 1972); and redesign of school architecture (Mallowe, 1976).

Part of the attraction of these approaches is that they are highly visible and allow harried administrators

to show their various constituencies (such as Boards of Education, parents, the press, etc.) that they are responding to the problem. They are also fairly easy to install, causing few long-term discontinuities in the organization. And, as a fairly precise costing can be done for much of this hardware, budget allocations are straightforward and predictable.

While these approaches are highly touted (especially by vendors) as being helpful in reducing violence while being cost-effective, there is little evidence to support these claims. Moreover, increasing security hardware tends to increase the external-control orientation of a school, possibly proving counterproductive over time by antagonizing students. Finally, while certain security measures might be necessary in the short run to safeguard life and property, they do little to alleviate the underlying causes of symptoms such as vandalism.

Counseling Services

These programs have been advocated as means of helping students recognize and cope with various problems which often lead to violent behavior. Numerous approaches have been suggested, ranging from individual counseling to peer counseling. For example, Wenk (1974) advocates

counseling programs as a means of dealing with school tensions; he also suggests the use of college students as "big brothers." DeCecco and Richards (1975) also advocate counseling as a means of dealing with conflict, and Lion (cited in Shane, 1974) suggests psychiatric therapy for violent children.

Like security systems, these programs are under-evaluated, making it difficult to know how useful they are. Conceptually, they have a tendency (as discussed earlier) to put the blame on the individual student, as opposed to looking at the interaction between the student and the school. In addition, Lortie (1965) noted that school counselors are often torn among the administrative role of processing students (as during registration), the advocate role of protecting the student against the organization, and the therapist role of helping the student conform to organizational expectations. While counseling services do have the potential to help students recognize and understand organizational norms (and thus help the organization become more internal in its control patterns), few counseling programs are actual attempts to alter the control orientation of the school.

Curriculum/Instructional Programs

Students and teachers alike assail current school instructional programs, and changing them is one response to disruption. Cardinell (1974) reported that school violence was correlated with low academic achievement and advocated remedial-reading programs. Berger (1974) suggests classes in which students learn about the law, their rights, and their responsibilities. Haan (1973) suggests courses in the nature of violence; courses in school security are mentioned by Juillerat (1977); and Marvin et al. (1976) mention drug education programs.

Curricula more relevant to students' needs and interests have been suggested, such as Philadelphia's Parkway Project, which was an attempt to move education from the classroom to the surrounding community, or Wenk's (1974) peer-conducted research, in which students join faculty to investigate a topic of importance, such as drug use.

Alterations in school curricula differ somewhat from the previous two categories in that they imply that the school, rather than the student, is in need of change. In addition to the usual problems of evaluation, changes in curriculum do not necessarily imply a change in the control

orientation of the school. Of course, an administration intent on changing curriculum might well be an administration intent on increasing internal controls, but curriculum changes are not designed to alter the control patterns.

Organizational Modifications

A variety of modifications have been implemented throughout the nation: increasing student input to academic decisions (Berger, 1974), active student courts (McPartland et al., 1971), student security patrols, negotiating teams of faculty and students (DeCecco & Richards, 1975), joining representatives of community, police, and school to form a team (St. Louis Public Schools, 1976), allowing students to distribute funds allocated but not expended on vandalism repair (Haney, 1973), and dividing a large middle school into clusters in an attempt to reduce students' feelings of anonymity (Sanders & Yarborough, 1976).

While many of these programs need careful evaluation, they have the potential to alter patterns of school control; in fact, many of them are designed to increase student control of school governance, thus shifting control from an external orientation (rules made and enforced by the

administration) to an internal one (students making the decisions).

Other types of solutions to school violence have been effective (cf. Juillerat, 1972). Juillerat discusses the use of various automatic sprinkling and alarm systems to cut down loss by arson, and reports that one district reduced its losses by 90 percent in one year by this method. Granting that these effects remained stable over time and that they were in fact due to the automatic systems, the schools involved are still confronted by two major problems. First, they have not dealt with the underlying causes of the arson; it is quite likely that new forms of deviance will arise. And, second, they may have escalated a technological war with the vandals. For example, school districts have been replacing glass with unbreakable Lexan; however, students have learned that, while they cannot break this high-impact plastic, they can scratch it and burn it. Perhaps students will find a way to breach the antiarson systems. When only symptoms of a problem are treated, an apparent cure can be illusory.

Conclusions

By way of review, this analysis began with an over-

view of explanations of school disruption and a discussion of the relationship of low SES to this seemingly growing problem. An organizational analysis of school disruption followed, arguing that schools organized along rule-oriented control patterns are likely to be less effective in responding to disruption -- and more likely to engender it -- than are schools with an internal-control, or normative, orientation. While poverty does not explain school disruption, many low-SES students are in external-control-oriented schools. Discussion of types of solutions to school disruption followed, with organizational modifications appearing to be the best, since they would increase student commitment to the school through internal controls.

What are we to make of this analysis in terms of school policy? In one sense, the argument is common enough: obviously students committed to an organization are not going to act out against it. A trivial statement, perhaps -- but one which runs counter to much educational practice in general, and schools' responses to disruption in particular. Just as evidence of declining test scores are met by calls from parents and educators to "get tough with kids," so, too, are increases in disruption met

with calls for more discipline and stricter enforcement. Calling instead for more of an internal-control orientation is not new. Writing in 1850, Page recommended that troublesome students be won over by giving them responsibilities or duties to assist the teacher in running the school. Too often, however, our response a century and a quarter later is to deny students access to school governance functions. Too few schools follow the lead of West Point, which, following a widespread cheating scandal, decided that its honor code would no longer be enforced by faculty officers, but rather by a court of cadets ("Cadets as Judge," 1976). Here we see a normative technique being instituted, as opposed to responding with increased rules or sanctions.

That school officials need to implement security systems is clear: violent behavior is unacceptable in schools, and the situation must be made safe and stable. Unfortunately, policy makers frequently respond with the short-term techniques necessary to cope with immediately distressing symptoms, and then fail to implement the long-term approaches necessary to get at underlying causes. The history of law enforcement, for example, is replete with instances of temporary decreases in crime due to technological advances in police practice which were soon offset by

technological advances by violators (for example, police radar was soon challenged by radar detectors and CB radios, while the underlying causes for speeding still exist).

Altering school organizational patterns to increase internal-control orientations calls for effort by both students and school staff. Students need to recognize their responsibilities as members of a community. Administrators need to be committed to increasing student access to school governance, for example, if students are going to take the school's goals for their own. Hopefully, these kinds of changes will reduce school disruption.

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